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ABSTRACT

Twenty-eight deans of instruction (out of 29 contacted) responded to a survey eliciting information on institutional research at small junior colleges (head-count enrollment of 3,000 or less) in Texas. The survey instrument covered four general questions: (1) is there a systematic on-campus procedure for compiling information; (2) what information is compiled; (3) how is the information used; and (4) who handles this information? Seventy-five percent of respondents indicated having a systematic information gathering procedure. Question two covered 25 categories such as cumulative grade and class attendance reports, contact hours, student characteristics and demography, institutional costs, and faculty activities. All colleges collected information on only three areas--contact hours, student ethnic origins, and sex--while more than half the campuses gathered information on grade reports, full- or part-time status, grade point average summaries, first-time entry status, and library use. All respondents used some data for determining honor student lists and completing required state and federal reports. Only one campus had a research coordinator, and only nine colleges budgeted for institutional research. A copy of the survey instrument with positive answer percentages for respondents is included. (TR)

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INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH IN SMALL JUNIOR COLLEGES IN TEXAS

By

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JC 780 279

INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH IN SMALL JUNIOR COLLEGES IN TEXAS

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In-house research, better known as institutional research, is a sometime thing in the small junior colleges of Texas. This is the opinion of the researcher based on a survey of the junior colleges with enrollments of 3000 students or less.

The Research Committee of the Texas Association of Community and Junior Colleges was of the opinion that information on and the utilization of institutional research in the smaller junior colleges of Texas could result in a better use of time and effort by the various institutional researchers.

The process of preparing this survey instrument was based on two assumptions. The first was the identification of "small" junior colleges. It was assumed that in Texas a "small" junior college was one that has a head-count enrollment of 3000 students or less based on the reports of enrollment figures for 1976-77. The justification for this assumption was a junior college with more than 3000 students would have sufficient personnel and finances to warrant the employment and use of a full time institutional researcher. (If the Gross study, [ERIC Topical Paper No. 62] is valid, this could easily be an erroneous assumption.)

The second assumption was that small junior colleges in Texas have no systematic procedures for compiling information of a statistical nature so that appropriate information can be gathered for policy and operational decisions. This presumes decisions are made in developmental, financial, and procedural areas without sufficient institutional information.

It would be appropriate at this point to state what is meant by institutional or in-house research. For the purposes of this survey, institutional research is defined as the compilation, codification, and analysis of statistical information in such areas as enrollment and student characteristics, student credit-hour production (academic, vocational, or adult education), gradepoint averages, faculty utilization, and completion or graduation. An institutional researcher is defined as the one individual responsible for amassing this information and analysing it for administrative decision making.

The survey instrument was prepared in such a manner that a response would take a minimum of time. It was a check sheet that could be answered yes or no and covered four general questions.

1. Is there a systematic procedure on campus for compiling information?
2. What information is compiled?
3. How is the information used?
4. Who handles this information?

Twenty-nine questionaires were sent to the deans of instruction or vice-presidents for instruction. This summary includes 26 responses (90% return).

In response to question one, seventy-five percent of the respondents state they have a systematic procedure for compiling information.

Question two asked about twenty-five catogories of information collected. Only in three of thses is information amassed by all the respondents: contact hours by HEGIS classification, ethnic origin, and sex. Twenty-four colleges keep cumulative grade reports

for the campus, cumulative grade reports by individual teachers, contact hours generated by each teacher, full time vs. part-time students, and the number of out-of-state students. Twenty-three schools keep a tally on foreign students. Twenty-two colleges amass summaries of individual GPA's and the number of students needing financial assistance. Twenty schools compile information on the number of first-time entry of students. Eighteen colleges keep statistics on the number of students who participate in intercollegiate athletics. Seventeen schools amass class attendance reports and student use of the library. Sixteen schools keep a record of the age catogories of students. Fifteen colleges summarize the totals of student GPA's. Fourteen schools accumulate information on the number of student transfers in/out, institutional cost per contact hour by HEGIS classification, and summaries of student majors. Twelve colleges keep laboratory attendance records by course, the number of student re-entries each semester, and the number of students who participate in intramural athletics. Nine schools determine institutional cost for administrative services by contact hour. Eight colleges record faculty attendance at professional meetings. Seven schools maintain records on faculty self-development projects, and faculty memberships in professional organizations.

Since the spectrum of information that can be useful is so wide, the responses to question three were also divergent. All the respondents use some information for determining the list of honor students and to complete HEW and CB (Coordination Board, Texas Colleges and Universitites) reports. Twenty-four respondents

use the information gathered for counseling students for degree purposes. Twenty-three colleges use information for counseling students for probation or suspension. Twenty-two schools use information for VA attendance reports. Twenty colleges use the information to determine the need for and number of part time instructors. Nineteen respondents utilize the information gathered to determine economic feasibility for increasing or decreasing personnel in a department, course, or division. Seventeen schools use the information to estimate funds for CWSP or similar programs and to make a cost analysis of their operations. Sixteen schools use the information to determine overload payments for teaching. Fifteen schools project departmental budgets for the next year. Fourteen schools determine areas of increasing service to the community and estimate probable "income" for the next year. Only one college uses this information for merit salary increases and one school uses it as a part of determining tenure for faculty.

The fourth area was made up of five questions. Where there is no one person responsible for the accumulation of information (an institutional researcher), who usually does it? Since one junior college in the respondents has a coordinator of institutional research, various bits of information were gathered by the registrar (fourteen colleges), the academic dean (fifteen), counseling (five), the vocational dean (five), the dean of students (twelve), and a list of others including the business manager (three), the department chairman, the librarian, a vice-president, an assistant president, and a research and development person.

Of the twenty-six respondents, only nine budget for institutional research. Ten schools indicated they were content with their institutional research, fourteen said they needed more, and one respondent said he needed less. Opinions on the adequacy of institutional research were divided almost equally: Twelve said yes, fourteen said no. Opinions on the usefulness of information of this nature on a state-wide basis brought twenty-one yes responses, three no responses, and two with no opinion. A few comments were made on the state-wide information (IV, 5): selective data would be useful; sharing methods of collecting data would be useful; information on how data would be used; and the possibility of problems with the Buckley Amendment.

A cusory examination of the reports indicates some obvious comments. The first is that every junior college needs some institutional research so that certain required reports to state and federal agencies may be facilitated. Second, there may be "reason" but there is no "rhyme" to the assignment of responsibility for assimulating information. The varying number of assignemts (IV, 1) shows considerable overlap in the areas. Twenty-five colleges show a total of 57 persons responsible for statistical information. Since the state of Texas has a follow-up system required of each state supported junior college, this item was not included in the survey nor will it be considered here.

One of the initial assumptions that there is no systematic procedure in compiling information seems to have been in error. Seventy-five percent of the responses indicated there is a system of some sort on the campuses. When this is compared with the question on who does the work, there is a wide variety of offices

responsible for it. Then, too, only 38% of the respondents are content with the arrangement and 46% say their system is adequate. There responses seem to indicate that fewer than 50% of the decisions made in developmental, financial, and procedural areas are with adequate institutional information..

The selection of information to be gathered and the use to which it is put indicates to some extent the individuality and community needs of the responding institutions.

The purpose of this survey was to find out, within general areas, what information is being gathered and what use is being made of it in the small junior colleges in Texas. Institutional administrators (at least their institutions) are being taxed more and more to produce statistical information for the federal government, the state government, and accrediting associations; and at the same time, there are areas of information peculiar to each campus that is needed to make decisions that affect only the local institution. Such items as full time professional personnel needs, departmental operation expenses, overload pay, the need for part time teachers, and estimates of operating funds for each department of division are bits of information available only on the local campus.

It would seem then that some attention should be paid by the administration to a systematic procedure for procuring information to be maintained in a single respondent or office, and that funds should be budgeted for institutional research so that decisions germane to institutional activities would have a substantial basis in statistical information. Without this kind of information, an administrative decision is a more or less educated guess.

IN-HOUSE RESEARCH

Name of College: Summary

Respondent: 26 of 29

Please check the responses that apply to your college.

I. We have a systematic procedure for assimulating pertinent on-campus information. 73%yes 27%no

II. From local sources we accumulate the following information:

1.	Cumulative grade reports (total for campus)	92%
2.	Cumulative grade reports (by individual teacher)	92%
3.	Class attendance reports	65%
4.	Laboratory attendance reports by course	46%
5.	Contact hours generated by departments (divisions) based on HEGIS numbers	100%
6.	Contact hours generated by individual teachers	92%
7.	Summaries of student GPA's (totals)	58%
8.	Summaries of individual student GPA's	85%
9.	Summaries of student majors	54%
10.	First-time entry of students	77%
11.	Numbers of student re-entries	46%
12.	Numbers of student transfer	54%
13.	Sex of students	100%
14.	Ethnic origins of students	100%
15.	Age categories of students	62%
16.	Full-time, part-time students	92%
17.	Student use of the library	65%
18.	Number of out-of-district in-state students	85%
19.	Number of out-of-state students	92%
20.	Number of foreign students	88%

21.	Number of students requiring financial aid	85%
22.	Number of students participating in intercollegiate athletic	69%
23.	Number of students participating in intermural athletic	46%
24.	Institutional cost per contact hour by HEGIS in academics	54%
25.	Institutional cost for administrative services by contact hour. (Departmental Operating Expenses)	35%
26.	Faculty self development projects	27%
27.	Faculty membership in professional associations	27%
28.	Faculty attendance at professinal meetings	31%

III. We use this information for:

1.	Counseling students for degree proposes	92%
2.	Counseling students for probation or suspension	88%
3.	Determining list of honor students	100%
4.	Attendance reports for VA	85%
5.	Determining economic feasibility for increasing or decreasing personnel in a department, course, or division	73%
6.	Determining areas of increasing services to a community	54%
7.	Completing HEW and CB reports	100%
8.	Determining need and number of part-time instructors	77%
9.	Estimating funds for CWSP and similar programs	65%
10.	Cost analysis	65%
11.	Merit salary increases	4%
12.	Overload payments for teaching	62%
13.	Projecting departmental budgets for next year	58%
14.	Estimating probable "income" for next year	54%
15.	Determining tenure for faculty	4%

Please list any other uses to which you put this information.

IV. Potpourri

1. If you do not have a person responsible for institutional research, who usually does it? (one or more?)
   Registrar 54% Academic Dean 58% Counselor 19% Vo Tech Dean 19% Dean of Students 50% Other (who?) 35%

2. Do you budget for institutional research? 35% yes 65% no

3. Are you content with 38%, need more 58%, need less 4% institutional research on your campus?

4. Are your institutional research procedures adequate for your needs? 46% yes 54% no

5. Do you think this sort of information on a state-wide basis will be useful to you? 80% yes 12% no 8% undecided

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